

## Main Street Revisited: Time, Space, and Image Building in Small-Town America

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whatsoever in politics, history, or public life. Her tenure as First Lady was spent attending numerous receptions, visiting with grandchildren, watching soap operas, and decorating the family farm at Gettysburg. On the other hand, Mamie's life story does throw some light on the varieties of middle-class experience in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Her family was both intensely religious and very modern at the same time. Despite her family's wealth, little attention was paid to their daughters' education. Also, Mamie's sister was divorced and remarried with Mamie's support.

*Main Street Revisited: Time, Space, and Image Building in Small-Town America*, by Richard V. Francaviglia. American Land and Life Series. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996. xxiv, 224 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth, \$17.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY GERALD A. DANZER, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO

*Main Street Revisited* is a thoughtful compilation of observations and illustrations from the extensive files of a historical geographer who has been studying the major commercial streets of America's towns for thirty years. He marshals an array of resources under three major rubrics—time, space, and image—with each division making a major point. First, Main Street has changed over time. Each era, including our own, has used the broad avenue in its own way, contributing to its character, look, and reputation. Spatial considerations are also important, giving each variant of the general phenomenon a peculiar appearance, status, and sense of place. Finally, placing Main Street in the broad context of American culture, this study ably documents how Main Street became an American icon.

The key to the book is section three, where we discover that the person who unlocked the secret attractions of Main Street was Walt Disney. Main Street USA in Disneyland, a product of the early 1950s, used certain aspects of the thoroughfare in its prime, from about 1890 up to 1920, to reassure a later generation of its roots, its heritage, and its destiny. If the prospective reader wants to quickly grasp the relevance of the book, the best advice is to read part three first, understand Disney's contribution, then go back to the foundation chapters on time and space.

Before returning the volume to the shelf, however, readers will want to spend some additional time with *Main Street Revisited*. First read, or reread, Wayne Franklin's succinct foreword, which develops the context for the study. Then return to the sixteen axioms about Main Streets that the author uses throughout the book to pull his

notes together. These are conveniently restated on pages 189 to 191. Then, if one has the patience, check the rich bibliography, noting the far-flung professional literature on which the study is based. Even the most knowledgeable observer will find some new avenues to explore in this list.

But Professor Francaviglia will be most pleased, I am sure, if instead of heading directly for the library, we instead make a pilgrimage to a nearby Main Street. Here we can see for ourselves, savoring the scene, checking the time of the place, and perhaps adding another axiom to the list. In the final analysis, this book pushes us out of our chairs, helping us to look with discerning eyes and to ponder anew the deeper meaning of our built environment.

*The Changing American Countryside: Rural People and Places*, edited by Emery N. Castle. Rural America Series. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995. xx, 563 pp. Maps, tables, notes, index. \$25.00 paper.

REVIEWED BY CATHERINE MCNICOL STOCK, CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

While the politicians in Washington may not have noticed, for the past fifteen years the people of rural America, and those in the heartland states in particular, have experienced a significant transformation of local economic and social structures. Farms, farm families, and farm businesses that had stood for generations have disappeared. Consolidated farms, corporate farms, chain stores, discount warehouse stores, and suburban subdivisions have taken their place. Those men and women who remain on the land have adjusted to these new economic circumstances by working off the farm and learning to spend as much time on the computer as in the fields. Even with recently higher prices for certain crops, hard times on the farm continue—hard times that have added fuel to the flames of some extremist political movements.

*The Changing American Countryside* provides scholarly evidence of what rural folks have experienced for nearly two decades. For that reason and several others, it is a very useful anthology. Its stated goals are two: it hopes, first of all, "to push back the frontiers of knowledge" about current trends in rural America; and second, "to influence the thoughts and actions of both scholars and [the] public" (xv). A compilation of twenty-six essays written by members of the National Rural Studies Committee from sociology, economics, geography, political science, anthropology, and agriculture departments of colleges and universities across the United States, *The Changing American Countryside* details diverse structural and societal changes in non-metropolitan America. Much of the data it provides can not be found in any other

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